

Civilian Police: Future of the Military Police Corps

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Introduction

Can civilian police officers really protect military bases as well as active duty Soldiers and Marines? Many say they cannot; however, due to the growing demand for military police (MP) overseas, civilian police have become a necessary part of the Armed Forces. The Provost Marshal's Office (PMO) at Marine Corps Base Quantico has "identified a need for more field MP due to our mission in Iraq and Afghanistan."¹ Officials at other DoD installations have the same view. Marine Corps Air Station Beaufort and Parris Island Recruit Depot are now "hiring [civilian] police officers to free up the military police to fight the war on terror."² With more MP every year committed to the Global War on Terror (GWOT), few will be left to patrol and guard our bases. In fact, civilian police officers must continue to be employed throughout the Department of Defense (DoD) because of the high demand for MP overseas and at our home stations.

¹ Cpl. Shaahn Williams, "Military Police to Enlist Civilian Aid," *Quantico Sentry*, 6 March 2008, <www.quantico.usmc.mil/Sentry/StoryView.aspx?SID=1698> (28 November 2008).

² Patrick Donohue, "Local Bases Seek Civilian Police," *Beaufort Gazette*, 28 July 2008, <www.beaufortgazette.com/local/v-print/story/505093.html> (28 November 2008).

Need for MP Overseas

Seven years into the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, the United States military continues to struggle to provide enough MP to the operating forces. Currently, active duty MP in the Marine Corps number approximately 3,500 and 33,000 in the Army. Operational tempo has stretched the MP Corps thin since 2001, reports Trista Talton, a staff writer for the Marine Corps Times.³ In her article, the Security Branch Chief for Plans, Policies and Operations at Headquarters Marine Corps, Lt. Col. Stephen Simpson, confirmed that active-duty Marines are needed more on the front lines as opposed to working at their home stations.⁴

Stating that Marines and Soldiers are needed overseas more than at home stations does not negate the fact that base security is always a priority for installation and garrison commanders. Talton interviewed Major Adolfo Torres, Camp Lejeune's Deputy Provost Marshal, who stated that since the beginning of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), the base PMO has been 100 MP short of its task organization requirement.⁵

³ Trista Talton, "Civilian Hires Will Counter MP Shortage," *Marine Corps Times*, 13 November 2007, <www.marinecorpstimes.com/news/2007/11/marine_security> (28 November 2008).

⁴ Talton, 1.

⁵ Talton, 1.

Need for Home Station Security

Allison Choike, a reporter with Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri's *The Guidon*, writes that the concept of hiring civilians to fill the law enforcement void on Army installations began as early as the 1980s.⁶ For nearly twenty years, little was known about the 5,500 civilian police employed at 157 DoD agencies.

Ft. Riley, Kansas, home of the Army's 1st Infantry Division, was a completely open post until the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Immediately thereafter, units from around the post led by military police were called upon to serve as gate guards and to increase patrols. Shortly thereafter, the two MP companies and three combat brigades commenced training cycles for deployment to the Middle East. This gap at the gates and on the streets led to the Ft. Riley PMO having no other choice but to hire civilians. Throughout the GWOT, employing civilians has become standard practice and, privately contracted security guards currently guard the gates at Ft. Riley and nearly all Army installations.

At large installations, two types of military police exist-division and combat support. Division MP have a

⁶ Allison Choike, "Fort Leonard Wood Trains DA Installation Civilian Police," *The Guidon*, 5 June 2008, <www.myguidon.com/index2.php?option=com_content&task=view> (28 November 2008).

primary mission of supporting brigade combat teams in their missions. Combat support (CS) companies are the primary force providers for patrolling the base. CS units get plenty of practical experience and training in law enforcement, which keeps them current in their field, whereas division MP do not get a lot of patrol time.

Another force provider on Army installations is the U.S. Army Reserve military police. Throughout the war on terrorism, units have been mobilized not to deploy overseas, but to serve at CONUS bases. The reservists have filled the voids nearly as well as active duty MP. Reserve MP have been tasked with providing patrols, investigators, and MP station personnel. Finally, the unpopular Fleet Assistance Program (FAP) has been used by the Marine Corps to fill other MP vacancies guarding bases. In the FAP, non-MP operational units send Marines to their respective base's PMO to work MP duties. The losing units must then deploy without those Marines, which in wartime is difficult at best.⁷ Hence, hiring civilian police officers to fill these holes has become increasingly popular.

⁷ Talton, 1.

Standardization

In 2002, the Inspector General of the DoD released a report titled "Evaluation of Installation-level Training Standards for Civilian Police Officers (GS-0083) and Security Guards (GS-0085) in the Department of Defense." The report's objective was to determine whether DoD should standardize training for its civilian law enforcement personnel, and whether current training ensures the knowledge and expertise needed to perform essential law enforcement and security functions and respond to major threats and emergencies.⁸ As a direct result of DoD's findings, the Army was appointed as the executive agent for establishing training standards for the entire DoD and developed an extensive instruction package designed to "standardize training for all DoD police and guards."⁹

The Department of the Army Police and Guard Academy at the United States Army Military Police School (USAMPS) was born and graduated its first class in 2007. Standards and policy are now fairly universal DoD-wide, meaning that MP Soldiers and DA civilian police (DACP) undergo the same instruction. The essential training goal of the new

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *Evaluation of Installation-level Training Standards for Civilian Police Officers (GS-0083) and Security Guards (GS-0085) in the Department of Defense*, (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2002), 1.

⁹ Choike, 1.

civilian police academy is to provide new officers that are ready to work without much on-the-job-training (OJT).¹⁰

Opposing Views

Various senior military police officials from all levels believe that the MP Corps is losing its legitimacy as a law enforcement agency because they do not regularly conduct law and order. With the current rotation cycle for MP units, there is little time for conducting the law and order function at their home stations. During a conference at Ft. Hood in 2006, Major General Donald Ryder, a former Army Provost Marshal General, stated that the best training for MP was to actually get out there and patrol. Sergeant Major Christopher Zimmer, a retired Army MP, is the operations chief of the Ft. Hood, Texas Police Department. He stated "Most posts have a mix of MP and DA Civilian Police working law enforcement, about 50/50, with most of the DACP in the HQ and [special] sections; the majority of the patrols are MP."¹¹ This means that the DACP are working special duties such as military police investigators, game wardens, and traffic accident investigators. They also occupy jobs in the police station itself such as desk

¹⁰ Choike, 1.

¹¹ Christopher J. Zimmer, "DA Police Information," 3 December 2008, Personal Email (4 December 2008).

sergeants, dispatchers, and 911 operators. Zimmer concludes his email by saying that "on most installations there is a good mix of training, LE, and deployment."¹²

Other dissenters of civilian police officers believe that MP are better at their job because of tougher standards, but that is not accurate. As stated above, standards for MP and DoD civilian police officers are nearly identical. For example, Army Regulation (AR) 190-56, *The Army Civilian Police and Security Guard Program*, outlines qualifications, training, authorities, and equipment for civilian police and security guards. The physical agility test (PAT) for DACP is only one tool commanders can use to validate a DACP's physical and mental fitness. A PAT consists of:

- Two minutes of sit ups
- 300 meter sprint
- Two minutes of push ups
- 1.5 mile run

The requirement of a PAT ensures DACP must be physically and mentally fit prior to consideration for employment.

Many people have stereotyped civilian police as out of shape and overweight because of the way they are portrayed on television and in movies. The MP company

¹² Zimmer, email.

commander at MCB Quantico, Captain Daniel Arispe, contradicted this by stating that height and weight standards for Marine Corps Civilian Police Officers (MCCPO) are more rigid than those required of Marines.¹³

To further negate the view that MCCPO aren't as good as MP, newly hired civilian police officers are required to attend an eight to nine week academy regardless of their prior experience. Camp Lejeune will require its new hires to attend an eight week academy on the base and Quantico requires a nine week course.¹⁴ These courses ensure all new personnel enforcing laws on an installation are trained on local laws and standards. The Air Force, particularly the 56th Security Forces at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, is incorporating civilian officers into its ranks. They are required to attend the Veterans Administration Law Enforcement Academy in Little Rock, Arkansas, according to Master Sergeant Stephen Delgado.¹⁵

The Army has responded "yes" to the question of whether civilian police officers are the answer to commanders' need for MP at home and overseas, and the Marine Corps is beginning to agree. The demand for MP in

¹³ Williams, 1.

¹⁴ Williams, 1.

¹⁵ Stephen Delgado, "Security Forces Aided by Civilian Police," *Air Force Print News Today*, 14 November 2008, <www.luke.af.mil/news/story_print.asp?id=123124232> (30 November 2008).

deployable units will not cease any time soon; neither will the demand for police on home installations throughout the DoD. The Global War on Terror will not be allowed to take away from the ability to protect troops and citizens at home. Remember, every Soldier, Marine, Sailor and Airman was once a civilian before their tour of duty. If civilians cannot be trusted with the protection of DoD installations, who can?

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